

REMARKS

Applicants have now had an opportunity to carefully consider the Examiner's comments set forth in the Office Action of March 21, 2006.

Reconsideration of the Application is requested.

Statement of Substance of Interview

The Applicants wish to thank the Examiner for the courtesy of an interview which took place on April 18, 2006, by telephone. In the Interview, Applicants asked the Examiner to clarify his position that Jackson discloses "selectable sheet translation in a plane to selectably transport sheets from selected ones of plural sheet input areas to selected ones of plural sheet outputs areas so as to provide selectable sheet feeding from selected sheet input areas to selected sheet outputs areas." Applicants understand that it is the Examiner's position that, although Jackson only discloses single sheets being fed one by one, it was possible, for example, for two postcard-sized sheets to be fed side by side on the conveyor of Jackson. If Applicants have misconstrued the Examiner's position, he is kindly requested to provide further clarification.

While not conceding to the Examiner's position, in the interview, Applicants noted that the transport system of Jackson is designed for sheets to move in single file along the conveyor. There is no provision for controlling movement of sheets to selected sheet outputs areas or any suggestion as to how the sheets would be handled once they left the conveyor if, for example, two sheets were moved to a position other than at the middle of the conveyor belt, as is the object of Jackson.

The Office Action

Claims 1-16 remain in this application. Claim 1 has been amended. New claim 16 is added.

Claims 1, 5, 6, and 7 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as anticipated by Jackson, et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,634,636).

Claims 2, 8-10, and 14 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Jorg (U.S. Patent No. 5,810,346) in view of Graushar (U.S. Patent No. 5,100,116).

Claims 4, 11-13, and 15 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as unpatentable over Jorg in view of Graushar and further in view of Jackson, et al.

Claims 1, 3, and 5-7 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as unpatentable over Jorg in view of Jackson, et al.

For the reasons outlined below it is submitted that the claims are in condition for allowance.

Claim 1, as amended, recites an interface which includes a sheet transporting system. The sheet transporting system includes a plane having first and second angularly spaced sides. The sheet transporting system includes independently operable sheet transports and provides selectable sheet translation in the plane to selectably transport sheets from selected ones of said plural sheet input areas to selected ones of said plural sheet outputs areas so as to provide selectable sheet feeding from selected sheet input areas to selected sheet outputs areas. The sheet transports provide variable angle driving for selectable sheet rotation and translation of selected sheets in the plane whereby the sheets are selectably contemporaneously transportable in different directions towards the plural sheet outputs areas. A first of the sheet outputs areas is adjacent the first angularly spaced side and a second the sheet output areas is adjacent the second angularly spaced side.

Support for the amendments to claim 1 is to be found in the FIGURE and in the specification at paragraphs [0011] and [0018].

The references of record do not disclose or suggest such a system. The Examiner argues that the conveyor system of Jackson could have plural input areas at the first end of the conveyor and plural outputs areas at the second end and that the sheets may have different sizes than those illustrated in FIGURE 1 of Jackson.

Claim 1 now recites first and second sheet output areas adjacent first and second angularly spaced sides of a plane in which the sheets are transported. Jackson does not disclose or suggest such a system. The conveyor system disclosed by Jackson includes an upper section and a lower section which are substantially coextensive (col. 3, lines 25-26. In FIGURE 1, the upper section is illustrated cut away to make the contents of the lower section visible. This would not suggest to one of skill in the art that the upper section could be removed to allow sheets to be input from the left or right side of the conveyor.

Rather, one skilled in the art would immediately realize that the conveyor of Jackson has one sheet output area, at the downstream end of the conveyor. Even assuming, arguendo, that this output area could accommodate more than one sheet, there is no suggestion that sheets be taken off at different sides of the conveyor. Jackson seeks simply to maintain movement of the sheet in the downstream direction, thus correcting for any minor rotation or orientation of the sheet.

The Examiner further argues that claim 1 is unpatentable over Jorg in view of Jackson. Jorg discloses a paper handling system which includes modules 102, 200 which allow pieces of paper to be transported in a transport direction and in a direction transverse to the transport direction. There is no suggestion of selectively rotating the pieces of paper in Jorg's system. The Examiner points to element 134 of Jorg. However, this element is a turnover device. It does not permit rotation of the piece of paper via variable angle driving.

Nor does Jorg provide any motivation for rotation of sheets. Jorg's gathering path is nowhere more than one module wide. Thus, there is no motivation to provide sheet movement in other than the two orthogonal directions shown.

Accordingly, it is submitted that claim 1 and claims 3 and 5-7 dependent therefrom distinguish over the reference of record.

Claim 8 recites a system which includes a plurality of printers and a plurality of sheet input areas which receive printed sheets from the plurality of printers, each of the printers feeding printed sheets to a respective one of the sheet input areas. A sheet transporting system provides selectable sheet translation to selectably transport sheets from selected ones of the plural sheet input areas to selected ones of said plural sheet outputs areas so as to provide selectable sheet feeding from selected printers to selected sheet processing systems. First and second of the sheet input areas are positioned relative to first and second of the sheet outputs areas such that a path of a sheet transported between the first input area and the first outputs area crosses a path of a sheet transported between the second input area and the second outputs area.

Support for the amendments to claim 8 are to be found in the FIGURE.

Jorg does not disclose or fairly suggest a multifunction printed sheets interface system in which a plurality of printers feed printed sheets to a plurality of sheet input areas which receive printed sheets from the plurality of printers. In Jorg, the cutters are provided

with rolls of paper. There is no suggestion of printers feeding sheets to input areas.

Graushar discloses a collating and binding system in which preprinted blanks 16 ("signatures") are fed by a feeder 14 onto a conveyor 18. The signatures travel through one or more printing stations 22 where customized printing is performed. There is no suggestion in Graushar that the printing stations 22 feed printed sheets to a plurality of sheet input areas which receive printed sheets from the plurality of printers. Rather, the printing stations 22 are all together, in the same conveyor line. The printers do not feed printed sheets to the conveyor but merely print the sheets traveling on the conveyor.

Further, there is no suggestion in Graushar that a plurality of printers feed printed sheets to a respective one of a plurality of sheet input areas of Graushar's conveyor system. The Examiner points to col. 4, lines 45-56 as disclosing "printing sheets on a plurality of printers." However, this section refers to only a single printer 32. Further, there is no suggestion in Graushar as to how two or more such printers could each feed sheets to a respective sheet input area.

Further none of the references suggests a multiple sheets interface system where the paths of sheets cross on the interface.

Accordingly, it is submitted that claim 8 and dependent claims 2 - 4 and 9 - 13 distinguish over the reference of record.

Claim 14 now recites a method including printing sheets on a plurality of printers, feeding the printed sheets from the plurality of printers to a plurality of respective spaced input areas of a printed sheets interface system, transporting the printed sheets from the input areas to selected ones of a plurality of spaced output areas of the printed sheets interface system with a plurality of sheet transports, and sensing a position of the printed sheets during transporting. A sheet transported between first input and outputs areas crosses the path of a sheet transported between second input and outputs areas.

Jorg does not disclose such a method. In Jorg, sheets are transported from cutters 114. There is no suggestion or motivation in Jorg for conveying sheets from selected ones of a plurality of printers to selected ones of a plurality of output areas. There is no motivation for combining Graushar with Jorg. Graushar teaches a system in which every sheet travels past the printer. There is no suggestion of feeding printed sheets from plural printers to a plurality of respective spaced input areas or of sheets crossing in their paths.

Accordingly, it is submitted that claims 14 and 15 distinguish over the reference of record.

New claim 16 recites a multifunction printed sheets interface system which includes plural sheet input areas, plural sheet outputs areas, a sheet position sensing system, and a sheet transporting system. A controller independently controls the sheet transports to provide selectable sheet feeding from selected sheet input areas to selected sheet outputs areas, said sheet transports providing variable angle driving for selectable sheet rotation and translation of selected sheets in the plane whereby said sheets are selectively transported.

Support for new claim 16 is to be found in original claim 1 and in the specification at paragraph [0018].

The references of record do not disclose or suggest a controller which controls sheet transports to provide selectable sheet feeding from selected sheet input areas to selected sheet outputs areas. In Jackson, all of the sheets are directed to the same output area. There is no suggestion of a controller which provide selectable sheet feeding to selected sheet outputs areas.

Accordingly, it is submitted that claim 16 distinguishes over the references of record.

CONCLUSION

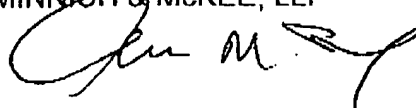
For the reasons detailed above, it is submitted all claims remaining in the application (Claims 1-16) are now in condition for allowance. The foregoing comments do not require unnecessary additional search or examination.

The undersigned attorney of record hereby authorizes the charging of fees totaling \$200. for additional claims and any other necessary fees, other than the issue fee, to Xerox Deposit Account No. 24-0037.

In the event the Examiner considers personal contact advantageous to the disposition of this case, he/she is hereby authorized to call Ann M. Skerry, at Telephone Number (216) 861-5582.

Respectfully submitted,

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May 23, 2006
Date

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